

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



AS I SEE IT

Gaming Technology Offers Lessons for Learning

March 15, 2010

Do you worry that the time your children spend with videogames is wasted time? As much as we would like for them to do something, anything, more productive than "getting to the next level," we can learn from videogames.

Here's what sets videogames apart as learning experiences - even if we may not always appreciate the learning objective:

- an environment that is safe and caring for learning; no one makes fun of you for a mistake;
- clear goals and objectives;
- a meaningful, engaging activity; and
- prompt, specific feedback.

The game provides a safe environment for trial and error, exploration and collaboration with other players and for immediate feedback about what works and what doesn't. And as players try new strategies, explore all the game has to offer and share with other players, they are more successful.

In the workplace, these same skills are necessary for success. In the classroom, we need to make our environment as friendly and safe for trial and error as a videogame. We need to provide students with quick feedback that helps them see what they need to learn next. And we need to foster collaboration and the thrill of solving a problem with others.

At the state level in North Carolina, we are working with teachers and principals, university staff and employers from across the state to redefine the state's Standard Course of Study, the student testing program and the school accountability model. The Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort, or ACRE, will identify Essential Standards - the most critical knowledge and skills for each subject area that students need to learn. And, we will be changing how we measure learning. The tests that students take today need to be more real-world and appropriate to help students and teachers make mid-course corrections when they need to.

Not to trivialize what students learn in school, but I believe we can take the best lessons from electronic gaming and use those to improve the appeal and the methods of classroom instruction and activities. If we do this, we will all win because students will stay in school and graduate ready for the next level, for careers and for adulthood.

Bill Harrison, Chairman
State Board of Education